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STANISLAUS COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION AWARDS MORE PROP. 10 GRANTS TO COMMUNITY

Modesto, Ca. --- You could call it an early Christmas present.

From playground equipment and supplies to free music programs for children and enrolling kids for health insurance, more Proposition 10 tobacco tax money is on the way to fund community projects to help improve the lives of children and families in Stanislaus County.

Last night, the Stanislaus County Children and Families Commission approved \$338,330 in mini grants and pilot program grants to fund various organizations to provide programs and services to children from prenatal to age five. In all, the Commission awarded 27 grants to a host of recipients including private daycare centers, community agencies, and schools. "We're delivering on the promise of Prop. 10 with the release of funds in our community," said Commission Chair Reverend Nathaniel Green.

This was the second time around for some of the organizations. Last September, the Commission asked that the United Way of Stanislaus County revisit some grant applications. The non-profit agency is partnering with the commission to help administer the Prop 10 money.

"We asked organizations that applied for mini-grants to provide us additional information or clarification about their application and they did," said Dorali Mitre, Community Impact Associate with United Way.

Some applications were recommended for full funding while others were recommended for partial funding. Grants were awarded in two categories: community designated pilot program grants of up to \$50,000 each and mini grants from \$250 to \$5,000. A one-time purchase of up to \$20,000 for playground equipment was also included in the mini grant cycle.

Gottschalk Music Center was awarded a \$4,900 mini-grant to bring free interactive music educational performances to pre-schools and day care centers countywide. "We have a music program, a brass quintet that will visit ten to fifteen sites playing music and teaching music education," said project coordinator C.K. Gottschalk. "We're very pleased with the grant award."

Von Renner Elementary School in Newman received \$20,000 to make improvements to its playground including multiple slides and climbing structures. "We're thrilled and very excited about this. It's great for the kids," said Vice-Principal Jeri Hamera.

Four organizations also received funding to implement designated pilot programs.

Among them was the Community Building Project. It was awarded a \$50,000 grant aimed at enrolling 0-5 children for health insurance. "The funding will allow us hire a community outreach worker to help enroll children throughout Stanislaus County," said staff member Bernadette Paul.

The money distributed is part of the first round of funding from Prop.10 tobacco tax money. Last month, the Commission awarded more than 1 million dollars in undesignated grants and in September, more than \$800,000 in mini grants was initially approved.

Funding for early childhood programs is unique. While studies indicate that a child's experience in the first years of life have a profound impact on education, social and economic outcomes, most public spending for children is focused on the years after the majority of brain growth has occurred. Funds generated from Prop. 10 support children at a local level, from prenatal to age five, by creating a comprehensive and integrated system of information and services to promote early childhood development and anti-tobacco education programs.

The Stanislaus County Children and Families Commission was established in 1998 after California voters passed Proposition 10, an unprecedented statewide initiative that levied a 50-cent tax per pack on cigarettes. Stanislaus County receives around 7.2 million dollars a year from the tobacco tax revenue.